

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MASERU 0603

CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PBOR, PEPR, SF (TRANSKEI), LT, EALR
SUBJECT: LESOTHO-TRANSKEI BORDER PROBLEMS

REF: A. MASERU 0560, B. MASERU 0559, C. MASERU 0531, D. MASERU
0515,

1. SUMMARY. THIS TELEGRAM IS AN ATTEMPT TO SUMMARIZE THE
FACTS OF THE LESOTHO-TRANSKEI BORDER SITUATION (REFTELS). THE CHANGE
IN DOCUMENTATION REQUIREMENTS BY TRANSKEI AUTHORITIES HAS
EFFECTIVELY HALTED BORDER CROSS NGS BY CITIZENS OF LESOTHO
(BASOTHO). THERE ARE ALREADY SUPPLY PROBLEMS IN THE QACHA'S NEK
AREA REGARDING FOOD AND MATERIALS. ALTHOUGH POSSIBILITIES EXIST
FOR SURMOUNTING PRESENT PROBLEMS, THE POLITICAL PRICE FOR DOING SO
MAY BE HIGHER THAN GOL IS WILLING OR ABLE TO PAY. END SUMMARY.

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2. BACKGROUND. THE SOUTHEASTERN CORNER OF LESOTHO (QACHA'S NEK
DISTRICT) HAS BEEN HEAVILY DEPENDENT HISTORICALLY ON THE SOUTH
AFRICAN TOWN OF MATATIELE FOR SUPPLIES, BANKING, TRANSPORT,
MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR AND MEDICAL SERVICES. THIS DEPENDENCY HAS
BEEN ABRUPTLY AND SEVERELY CURTAILED. ON FEBURARY 17, 1978,
TRANSKEI CHANGED DOCUMENTARY REQUIREMENTS FOR CITIZENS OF LESOTHO
WHO WANT TO ENTER TRANSKEI. NO VISAS ARE REQUIRED FOR SOUTH

AFRICANS AND NO CHANGE IN PREVIOUS VISA REQUIREMENTS HAVE BEEN MADE FOR HOLDERS OF BOTSWANA OR SWAZILAND PASSPORTS OR OTHER NATIONALS. PREVIOUS REQUIREMENTS WERE A FEE OF FIFTY CENTS (FOR A VISA) AND A LOCAL PASSPORT, BOTH PRESENTED AT THE BORDER AT THE TIME OF ENTRY. (THE LOCAL PASSPORT HAD TRADITIONALLY BEEN ACCEPTED AS TRAVEL DOCUMENT FOR THE BLS STATES, SOUTH AFRICA, SOUTH WEST AFRICA AND MOZAMBIQUE.) THE NEW REQUIREMENTS ARE AN INTERNATIONAL PASSPORT AND A VISA APPLICATION. THE VISA IS APPLIED FOR BY PAYING RAND 2.50 AND PRESENTING TWO PHOTOS. COMPLETED APPLICATIONS ARE SENT TO UMTATA. ALTHOUGH NO VISAS ARE REPORTED TO HAVE BEEN ISSUED, ATRANSKEI BORDER OFFICIAL TOLD UNDEP RES REP MCADAMS THAT THEY WOULD BE MULTIPLE ENTRY AND VALID FOR SIX MONTHS. THE TIME REQUIRED FOR ISSUANCE OF VISAS IS STILL UNKNOWN. IT IS GENERALL AGREED THAT SINCE FEBRUARY 17, NO CITIZENS OF LESOTHO HAVE LEGALLY ENTERED TRANSKEI.

2. GOL REACTION. GOL FIRST TOLD CITIZENS TO APPLY FOR TRANSKEI VISAS IF THEY HAD AN INTERNATIONAL PASSPORT (VERY FEW HAVE SUCH DOCUMENTS). THIS DECISION WAS LATER REVERSED BECAUSE OF CONCERN ABOUT TACIT RECOGNITION UNDER INTERNATIONAL LAW. LESOTHO INTERNATIONAL PASSPORTS ARE STAMPED FOR VALIDITY TO TRAVEL ONLY TO SPECIFIED AREAS, E.G. "ALL COUNTRIES OF EUROPE", "ALL COUNTRIES OF AFRICA", "CANADA AND THE USA"; PASSPORTS ARE NOT VALID FOR TRAVEL BEYOND COUNTRIES SPECIFICALLY NAMED. GOL HAS SEVERAL LEGAL QUESTIONS ABOUT ISSUING THESE PASSPORTS: IF THE PASSPORT IS VALID FOR "ALL COUNTRIES OF AFRICA", AND TRANSKEI PLACES A VISA STAMP IN

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IT, IS THAT GROUNDS FOR TRANSKEI CLAIM TO RECOGNITION AS A COUNTRY OF AFRICA? IS THERE ANY WAY THAT GOL COULD DISCLAIM RECOGNITION OF TRANSKEI IN THE PASSPORT AND STILL HAVE THE PASSPORT ACCEPTABLE TO TRANSKEI FOR VISA ISSUANCE? IS MENTION OF TRANSKEI BY NAME IN LESOTHO PASSPORTS A FORM OF RECOGNITION? UNTIL THESE QUESTIONS ARE ANSWERED, AND A SOLUTION FOUND, GOL WILL NO DOUBT URGE CITIZENS OF LESOTHO NOT TO APPLY FOR TRANSKEI VISAS. GOL IS STAUNCHLY COMMITTED TO NON-RECOGNITION OF TRANSKEI AND IS DETERMINED NOT TO BE FORCED OR TRICKED INTO IT.

3. BORDER CONDITIONS. FIRST HAD ACCOUNTS BY RECENT VISITORS (UNDP RES REP, ACTING UK HIGH COMM, ETC.) TO QACHA'S NEK AREA INDICATE DWINDLING SUPPLY OF FOOD AND OTHER MATERIALS AND RISING PRICES. SOUTHEASTERN LESOTHO IS NORMALLY SUPPLIED FROM THE RAIL-HEAD AT MATATIELE (SOUTH AFRICA) WHICH IS NOW SEPARATED FROM LESOTHO BY AN ARM OF THE TRANSKEI. SOME TRADERS HAVE BEGUN TO USE SOUTH AFRICAN OR TRANSKEI DRIVERS TO TRANSPORT SUPPLIES THROUGH THE TRANSKEI TO QACHA'S NEK. BASOTHO TRADERS, HOWEVER, ARE AFRAID TO ALLOW STRANGERS TO DRIVE OFF WITH THEIR TRUCKS AND THESE ARRANGEMENTS ARE IN ANY CASE DIFFICULT TO MAKE, EXPENSIVE AND LIKELY TO BE UNPOPULAR. THE TWO LARGE SOUTH AFRICAN TRADERS IN QACHA'S NEK, WHO HAVE BUSINESS CONNECTIONS IN MATATIELE (SOUTH

AFRICA) ARE IN AN ADVANTAGEOUS POSITION AND CONTINUE TO TRUCK IN SUPPLIES USING THEIR SOUTH AFRICAN DRIVERS. GOL IS ORGANIZING BUS AND TRUCK SERVICES FROM MOHALE'S HOEK; IT HAS TRANSFERRED FOUR BUSES FROM OTHER ROUTES TO ENHANCE THIS EFFORT. THE TWO VOLAGS CONCERNED WITH FOOD AID- CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICE AND WOLD FOOD PROGRAMME -- REPORT NO PROBLEMS WITH FOOD AID SHIPMENTS SINCE THEY USE SOUTH AFRICAN DRIVERS. HOWEVAR, FOOD AID IS DESTINED FOR SPECIFIC PROJECTS; IT DOES NOT GO ONTO STORE SHELVES FOR ORDINARY PEOPLE TO PURCHASE. IN ADDITION TO FOOD SUPPLY AND PRICE PROBLEMS, BASOTHO IN SOUTHEASTERN LESOTHO NOW FIND THEMSELVES CUT OFF FROM BANK ACCOUNTS MAINTAINED IN MATATIELE AND FROM THE VITAL REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE SERVICES AND MEDICAL FACILITIES IN THAT TOWN.

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4. OPTIONS. BESIDES EMPLOYING SOUTH AFRICAN DRIVERS AND RELYING ON SOUTH AFRICAN TRADERS TO MOVE SUPPLIES TO QACHA'S NEK, OTHER OPTIONS ARE AVAILABLE TO MITIGATE THE CRISIS, E.G. BASOTHO DRIVERS COULD BE USED AS FAR AS THE BORDER, WHERE SOUTH AFRICAN OR TRANSKEIANS COULD TAKE OVER. ALSO, THE TWO LARGE SOUTH AFRICAN TRADERS IN QACHA'S NEK SHOULD BE ABLE TO KEEP THEIR SHOPS STOCKED. GOL IS HASTENING TO CONSTRUCT A WHOLESALE OUTLET IN QACHA'S NEK AS A PRIORITY PROJECT. THIS FACILITY WOULD BE SUPPLIED PRIMARILY VIA MOHALE'S HOEK AND MASERU USING TRUCKS PURCHASED OR DIVERTED FROM OTHER USES. THE RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF FOOD FOR WORK AND SELF-HELP PROJECTS IS BEING CONSIDERED BY GOL AS A MEANS OF GENERATING

EMPLOYMENT AND GETTING MORE FOOD INTO THE AREA.

5. REMAINING PROBLEMS. SEVERAL SERIOUS PROBLEMS REMAIN FOR GOL WITH REGARD TO OPTIONS DISCUSSED IN PARA 4. MOST OF THE TRADERS IN QACHA'S NEK DISTRICT ARE BASOTHO AND HAVE ALWAYS USED BASOTHO DRIVERS; THE SWITCH TO SOUTH AFRICAN DRIVERS WOULD ADD TO UNEMPLOYMENT AMONG BASOTHO MEN. AT THE SAME TIME, THE MINERS
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FROM THE AREA NO LONGER CAN TRAVEL EASILY (THROUGH MATATIELE) TO THE MINES FOR EMPLOYMENT ON WHICH THEY AND THEIR FAMILIES DEPEND. BASOTHO TRUCK DRIVERS THROWN OUT OF WORK IN FAVOR OF SOUTH AFRICANS OR TRANSKEIANS OR TRADERS PUT OUT OF BUSINESS COULD BECOME VIOLENT. WHEN THE MINE RECRUITING OFFICE IN QACHA'S NEK WAS CLOSED IN 1977, UNREST, THAT INCLUDED VIOLENCE, FORCED THE REOPENING OF THE OFFICE. THERE IS ALSO A BASIC CONTRADICTION IN LESOTHO RESORTING TO THE USE OF SOUTH AFRICANS TO OVERCOME A PROBLEM CAUSED BY SOUTH AFRICA AND ITS TRANSKEI PAWN. (IT IS HIGHLY UNLIKELY THAT TRANSKEI COULD ACT WITHOUT SAG CONCURRENCE; SAG, OF COURSE, SHARES TRANSKEI'S INTEREST IN OBTAINING RECOGNITION OF THE HOMELANDS). ANOTHER HARDSHIP IS THE INCREASED COST OF FOOD, ETC. THE LAW OF SUPPLY AND DEMAND HAS ALREADY TAKEN EFFECT IN SOME AREAS, WITH TRADERS ASKING PRICES AT WHAT THE MARKET WILL BEAR AND SOME PEOPLE ARE UNABLE TO COMPETE FOR THE INCREASINGLY EXPENSIVE COMMODITIES. IN ADDITION, TRANSPORT COSTS ACROSS THE MOUNTAINS FROM MOHALE'S HOEK, MASERU AND BEYOND (IN SOUTH AFRICA) WILL ADD A HEAVY INCREMENT TO CONSUMER PRICES IN QACHA'S NEK.

6. COMMENT. TRANSKEI IS CLEARLY PROBING FOR WAYS TO BRING PRESSURE ON GOL TO RECOGNIZE IT BY REQUIRING AN INTERNATIONAL PASSPORT. SINCE TRANSKEI BORDERS ON ONE OF THE POOREST AND MOST UNDEVELOPED AREAS OF LESOTHO, THIS PRESSURE HITS LESOTHO IN A MOST VULNERABLE SPOT. IN ADDITION TO BEING ISOLATED BY RUGGED MOUNTAIN TOPOGRAPHY, QACHA'S NEK DISTRICT IS AN AREA OF POLITICAL OPPOSITION TO THE GOL WHICH MAY HELP ACCOUNT FOR ITS RELATIVE UNDERDEVELOPMENT, E.G. ITS LACK OF ROAD CONNECTIONS TO THE REST OF LESOTHO. WITH THE CREATION OF TRANSKEI AND CONCOMITANT BORDER PROBLEMS, GOL HAS ACTIVELY PURSUED AID AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS FOR THE AREA. GOL INTEREST IN AREA COULD BE FURTHER ENHANCED IF ELECTIONS ARE HELD IN THE NEAR FUTURE; THE RULING BNP (PRIMIN JONATHAN'S PARTY) WOULD NOT WRITE OFF ANY AREA OF THE COUNTRY.
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IN SUMMARY, WHILE SITUATION MAY NOT BE AS DIRE AS GOL WOULD LIKE

UN AND DONORS TO BELIEVE, THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS AS WELL AS COMPLICATED LEGAL ISSUES ARE INVOLVED. GOL WILL UNDOUBTEDLY REQUEST INCREASED AID TO THE AREA; IT HAS ALREADY ASKED THAT CURRENT AID PROJECTS BE SPEEDED UP. THE POSSIBILITY OF UNREST AND EVEN VIOLENCE IN THE AREA WOULD ADD URGENCY TO GOL'S AID REQUESTS. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE GOL IN DESCRIBING ITS PLIGHT IS CAPABLE OF USING EXAGGERATED LANGUAGE SUCH AS "BLOCKADE", "STARVING MASSES", AND "DIRE EMERGENCY". THE USE OF THESE TERMS REFLECTS BOTH THE DEEP CONCERN OF A COUNTRY SURROUNDED BY A NEIGHBOR WITH ANTAGONISTIC RACIAL POLICIES AND ALSO THE APPARENT AIM OF WRINGING OUT OF LESOTHO RECOGNITION OF THE BANTUSTAN TRANSKEI AS AN INDEPENDENT AND SOVEREIGN COUNTRY. THE WORDS ALSO DRAW ATTENTION TO LESOTHO'S PLIGHT FROM AN OVERWHELMINGLY SYMPATHETIC INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY. GIVEN THE ACTUAL AND POTENTIAL POLITICAL INTEREST AND SUPPORT, WE BELIEVE IT IS IN LESOTHO'S INTEREST NOT TO EMBELLISH THE FACTS WHICH SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES. WE HAVE BEEN TAKING ALL APPROPRIATE OPPORTUNITIES TO ENCOURAGE GOL OFFICIALS TO STICK TO THE FACTS -- THUR FAR WITHOUT NOTABLE SUCCESS. WE WILL KEEP TRYING AND SUGGEST THE DEPARTMENT TAKE OCCASIONS TO DO THE SAME. END COMMENT.

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